

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM**

The Missoula County Public Schools K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum aligns to the Montana Common Core Standards. The standards, which are divided into four broad strands: Reading Literature, Informational Text, and Foundational Skills K-5; Writing; Speaking and Listening; and Language, reflect the essential skills necessary for college and career readiness and responsible citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This document consists of three sections: K-5, 6-8, and 9-12, with high school separated into 9/10 and 11/12 grade bands. The standards include mastery-level student learning targets; individual classroom teachers will determine the scaffolding student learning targets necessary to achieve the desired mastery.

As students progress through each grade level, they read extensively from a wide range of increasingly challenging literary and informational texts in the arts, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Heightened emphasis is placed upon their ability to gather, analyze, synthesize, and share information and ideas, to pose questions and solve problems, and to evaluate large volumes of print, digital, and visual material.

<b>Distribution of Literary and Informational Passages by Grade in the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Framework</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Literary</b>	<b>Informational</b>
4	50%	50%
8	45%	55%
12	30%	70%

Source: National Assessment Governing Board. (2008). *Reading framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Education Progress*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. The percentages on the table above reflect the sum of student reading, not just reading in ELA settings. Teachers of senior English classes, for example, are not required to devote 70 percent of reading to informational texts. Rather, 70 percent of student reading across the grade should be informational.

The Standards aim to align instruction with this framework so that many more students than at present can meet the requirements of college and career readiness. In K–5, the Standards follow NAEP’s lead in balancing the reading of literature with the reading of informational texts, including texts in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. In accord with NAEP’s growing emphasis on informational texts in the higher grades, the Standards demand that a significant amount of reading of informational texts take place in and outside the ELA classroom. Fulfilling the Standards for 6–12 ELA requires much greater attention to a specific category of informational text—literary nonfiction—than has been traditional. Because the ELA classroom must focus on literature (stories, drama, and poetry) as well as literary nonfiction, a great deal of informational reading in grades 6–12 must take place in other classes if the NAEP assessment framework is to be matched instructionally. To measure students’ growth toward college and career readiness, assessments aligned with the Standards should adhere to the distribution of texts across grades cited in the NAEP framework.

Students devote significant time to writing in primarily three different types that are all integrally connected to their reading and units of study. Argumentative, persuasive writing holds a particular position of importance as students are called upon more frequently to present an opinion or claim and support it with textual evidence. Through informational/explanatory writing, students continue to demonstrate and apply their understanding of subjects, issues, and ideas being researched and studied. In addition, students convey real and imagined experiences and events in narrative pieces.

“NAEP outlines a distribution across the grades of the core purposes and types of student writing. The 2011 NAEP framework, like the Standards, cultivates the development of three mutually reinforcing writing capacities: writing to persuade, to explain, and to convey real or imagined experience. Evidence concerning the demands of college and career readiness gathered during development of the Standards concurs with NAEP’s shifting emphases: standards for grades 9-12 describe writing in all three forms, but, consistent with NAEP, the overwhelming focus of writing throughout high school should be on arguments and informative/explanatory texts. See following table.” *Montana Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects by Grade-Band*. Denise Juneau, State Superintendent, Montana Office of Public Instruction, <http://www.opi.mt.gov>, November 2011.

<b>Distribution of Communicative Purposes by Grade in the 2011 NAEP Writing Framework.</b>			
<b>Grade</b>	<b>To Persuade</b>	<b>To Explain</b>	<b>To Convey Experience</b>
4	30%	35%	35%
8	35%	35%	30%
12	40%	40%	20%

Source: National Assessment Governing Board. (2007). *Writing framework for the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress, pre-publication edition*, Iowa City, IA: ACT, Inc. As with reading, the percentages in the table reflect the sum of student writing, not just writing in ELA settings.

Students participate formally and informally in a variety of rich conversations both in class and electronically with students across the region, nation, and world. Being productive members of a global society requires many skills, but certainly students should be able to contribute accurate, relevant information, and listen and respond respectively to diverse perspectives. New technologies and digital texts have expanded the role of speaking and listening requiring students to incorporate graphs, images, links, audio, and video into their presentations.

As students become more skilled in the conventions of Standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics, they also become aware of the craft of language beyond “the rules.” Acquiring new general and academic vocabulary is fundamental to students comprehending the texts they are assigned and communicating more effectively in their writing and speaking.

As the district moves forward with implementation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Model of Change, a digital platform, [www.mcpsonline.org](http://www.mcpsonline.org), will host not only the information and resources included in this document, but also additional teaching ideas, materials, and strategies to facilitate collaboration and to increase student achievement.